



The President's Daily Brief

13 October 1971

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Yahya Khan has said he will not initiate hostilities with India and would welcome a mutual withdrawal of forces from the West Pakistani border. (Page 1)

Soviet planes based in Egypt have conducted a reconnaissance mission that flew within 20 miles of Tel Aviv. (Page 2)

The Soviets have destroyed their Salyut space station by bringing it into the earth's atmosphere, where it burned. (Page 3)

In Laos, the North Vietnamese are increasing their pressures against government units on the Bolovens Plateau. (Page 4)

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PAKISTAN-INDIA

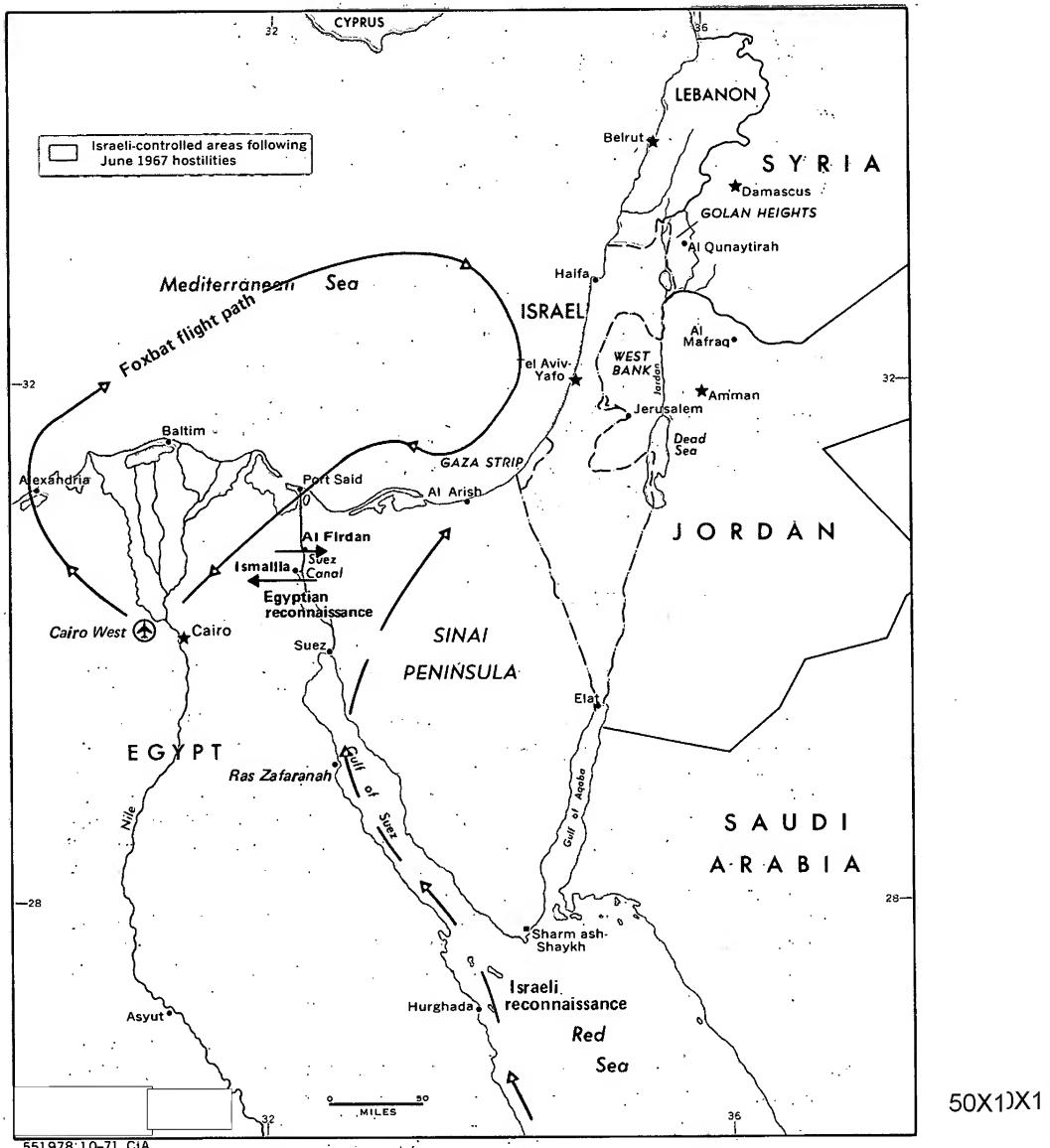
President Yahya has responded positively to US proposals for reducing the chances of war with India. He reaffirmed to the American chargé on Monday that Pakistan would not initiate hostilities and welcomed the idea of a mutual withdrawal of forces along the West wing's border with India. He denied that there had been serious skirmishing along this frontier. After brief consideration, he said that perhaps the chiefs of staff of the two armies could work out modalities for withdrawal since that forum had been used in the past.

As for the East, however, Yahya foresaw major problems. The 70,000-man army contingent there has few accommodations to which it could fall back away from the border, where it has taken over the duties of paramilitary forces that deserted to the insurgents last spring. Yahya made no promises, but agreed to consider replacing the army troops along the border with paramilitary forces formed since the fighting began. Yahya denied that Pakistan was contemplating military retaliation against India because of its support of the cross-border operations of the Mukti Bahini guerrillas, and was delighted with the chargé's assertion that the US intended to press India to restrict such operations.

Yahya's gratification about this last point no doubt is real. There have been 14,000 guerrillas in the field since summer, and the Indians have been training large numbers of reinforcements that are to go into action in East Pakistan this month. It is not likely that Yahya would pull his army from positions blocking the entry of such guerrillas until he was sure that the threat they posed was past. Yahya, however, no doubt sees the utility of US pressure against India's support of the guerrilla operations, even though he may not have much confidence that the Indians will agree to restrict their activities.

We have little doubt that at this time the Indians will reject the idea of restricting the operations of the Mukti Bahini. They might hesitate, however, to reject outright the proposal for a mutual withdrawal of forces from the Western border, because it has obvious advantages for them as well as for the Pakistanis.

In the light of the US suggestion on pulling back troops, Yahya apparently intends to shelve his own proposal for UN Security Council action.



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USSR-ISRAEL-EGYPT

[redacted] at least two Soviet-piloted Foxbat aircraft flew over the Mediterranean to within 20 miles of Tel Aviv on 10 October. They followed the coastline back to Port Said, where they re-entered Egypt. Only one aircraft entered Israeli-controlled airspace for a brief period.

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These unprecedented Soviet flights are meant to suggest an expanded Soviet role on Egypt's behalf and to remind the Israelis that they are no less subject to airborne reconnaissance than is Egypt. Since the start of the cease-fire, the Israelis have occasionally flown reconnaissance flights over the Mediterranean parallel to the Egyptian coast. It is likely that the Soviet activity had the approval of both Moscow and Cairo. In view of President Sadat's departure for the USSR on 10 October, the Soviets may have wanted to remind Cairo that their support for the Arab cause had not waned.

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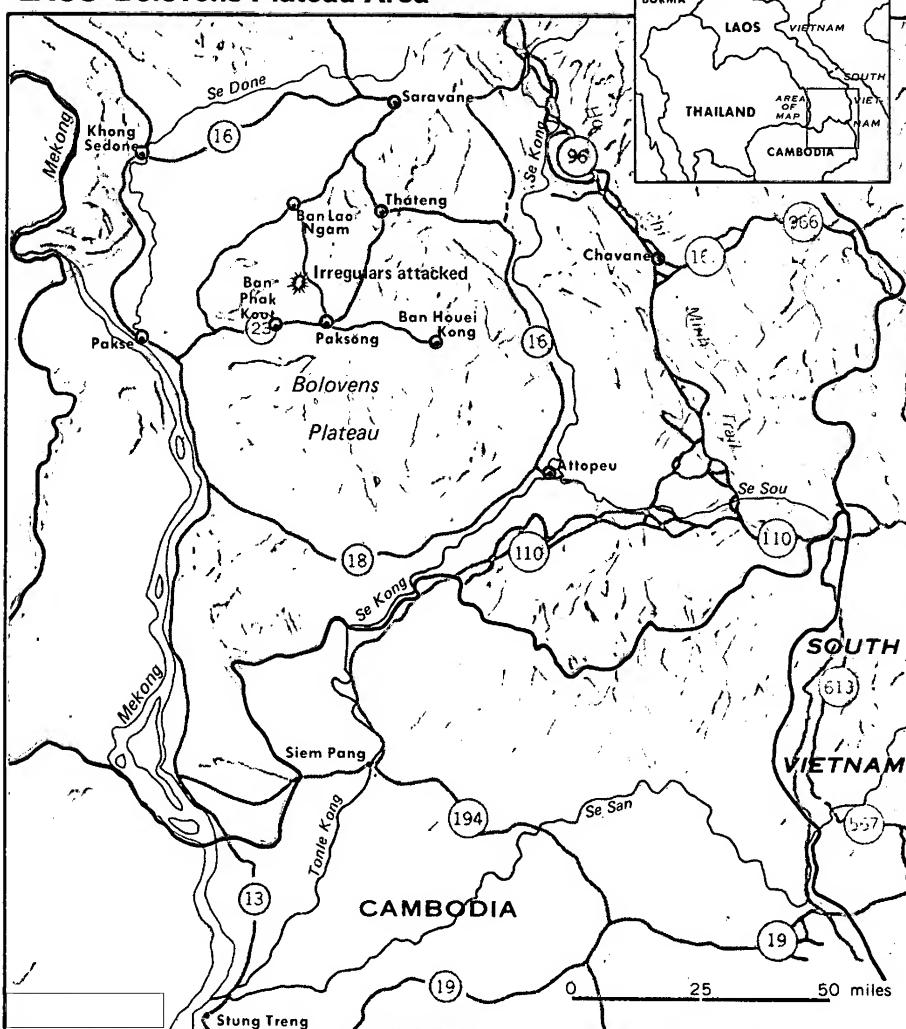
USSR

The Salyut space station launched last April burned up on re-entering the earth's atmosphere on 11 October. The Soviets apparently fired its engines to alter its course, thus guaranteeing this result, since the station was not designed for re-entry.

Salyut was involved in two manned space operations, Soyuz 10 and Soyuz 11. The Soyuz 10 mission aborted because it was unable to complete docking with Salyut, but the Soyuz 11 cosmonauts spent about three weeks aboard the station before their ill-fated return to earth. Since the completion of the Soyuz 11 mission, the Soviets had maneuvered the spacecraft into a higher orbit four times. The effect of these maneuvers was to extend the station's life, suggesting that Salyut would be involved in additional manned space operations. However, its orbit was lowered late last month.

There are several possible reasons why the Soviets decided to destroy the \$250 million-dollar space station. The electrical fire aboard Salyut during the Soyuz 11 mission possibly damaged the spacecraft; however, this was not serious enough at the time to terminate that operation. Some system aboard Salyut may have failed recently, or the Soviets may have finally completed experiments carried on the station. The Soviets also may have discovered something in their investigation of the Soyuz 11 incident which caused them to end the Salyut operation.

LAOS: Bolovens Plateau Area



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○ Communist-held location
○ Government-held location

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LAOS

The North Vietnamese are gradually increasing their pressure near Paksong on the Bolovens Plateau. Government units have been unable to clear the area northwest of the town. Nine miles to the north, a four-battalion task force was hit hard yesterday and forced to retreat. The number of enemy mortar attacks and probes has increased, and Communist fire on landing strips has caused the government to resort to airdrops for supplies.

The recent withdrawal of several irregular battalions from the Bolovens area has increased the government's vulnerability. Many of the units that remain are understrength or fresh from training.

The North Vietnamese recently moved elements of one battalion from the north and two from the east toward the central Bolovens. It is not clear, however, whether these units are to reinforce or replace the 9th NVA Regiment, which we believe suffered heavy casualties during its unsuccessful defense of Paksong last month.

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NOTES

USSR-Caribbean: A six-ship Soviet naval force apparently is headed for the Caribbean. Four anti-submarine ships and two tankers were some 1,000 miles west of Morocco yesterday after leaving the Mediterranean four days earlier. Although no submarines are known to be accompanying the surface ships, two cruise missile nuclear units which are in North Atlantic waters could rendezvous with them for the expected Caribbean operations. This would be the largest Soviet naval task force to visit the area, and the first since last June.

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